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INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 8303  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2154  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1615  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5523  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 4243  
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 4769  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RHFJSCC/COMMARFORPAC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 000363

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/04/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PHUM](#) [ECON](#) [EINV](#) [KDEM](#) [TH](#)  
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR AND HOUSE SPEAKER DISCUSS BILATERAL  
TIES, LEGISLATIVE AGENDA, ECONOMY

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Classified By: Ambassador Eric G. John, reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

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11. (C) House Speaker Yongyut Tiypairat told the Ambassador in a February 1 meeting that he would welcome visits to improve ties between the U.S. and Thai legislatures, as well as other programs aiming to enhance democracy in Thailand. Yongyut indicated he did not yet have a clearly defined legislative agenda and would not rush into major initiatives, such as constitutional reform or an amnesty for disenfranchised executives of the Thai Rak Thai party. The Ambassador and Yongyut exchanged ideas on the state of the economy and U.S. investment. We plan to exploit Yongyut's interest in business and investment issues to the advantage of the U.S. business community. End Summary.

GRATEFUL FOR U.S. HELP

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12. (C) The Ambassador called on February 1 on House of Representatives Speaker Yongyut Tiypairat. The Ambassador congratulated Yongyut on his election as Speaker; Yongyut repeatedly expressed his gratitude toward the United States, recounting that he applied for a U.S. student visa in Beijing after the 2006 coup and spent 11 months studying in Texas before returning to Thailand. Yongyut said he feared for his life during that time. (Note: Yongyut was one of a handful of close Thaksin associates detained by the coup leaders immediately following the coup. End Note.)

13. (C) The Ambassador said he would like to promote ties between the Thai and U.S. legislatures, including through reciprocal visits. Yongyut replied that he would welcome visits from the U.S. and efforts to build a relationship between the two Houses of Representatives. He hoped the U.S. could engage in exchanges and other programs in order to help restore the primacy of democratic values in Thailand. The

Ambassador explained that the Embassy would continue arranging visits of speakers, and would also coordinate with NGOs such as the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute, which have shown strong interest in Thailand since the coup.

#### PPP'S LEGISLATIVE AGENDA UNCLEAR

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¶4. (C) The Ambassador asked Yongyut about his legislative agenda. Yongyut emphasized a desire to promote reconciliation in Thai society, and he spoke in vague terms about promoting popular participation in politics. The Ambassador asked whether Yongyut planned to promote an amnesty for the 111 members of the Thai Rak Thai executive board (including deposed PM Thaksin Shinawatra) who were disenfranchised by a May decision by the Constitutional Tribunal. Yongyut said he hoped to pursue this "at an appropriate time," stressing that he would need to coordinate any such effort with the Prime Minister, the opposition (Democrats) and other "stakeholders." Yongyut adopted a similar tone on constitutional reform, indicating he did not foresee imminent efforts to amend the 2007 Constitution.

#### THE ECONOMY AND INVESTMENT

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¶5. (C) After Yongyut mentioned his home province of Chiang Rai, in northern Thailand, the Ambassador described U.S. business activities in the North and expressed interest in promoting further U.S. investment in that region. Yongyut highlighted tourism as one of the major industries in the North. Yongyut also noted efforts underway to build roads and bridges connecting Chiang Rai to southern China. Speaking more broadly, Yongyut said he hoped to promote stability, transparency, and accountability, in order to

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improve the investment climate in Thailand. He said that there would necessarily be a period of transition as the new administration would work to undo many of the policies (NFI) of the coup-installed interim government.

#### ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT ENVIRONMENT

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¶6. (C) In what may have been a display of false humility, Yongyut added that he did not anticipate serving a lengthy term as House Speaker; he said he looked forward to retiring from politics and working on environmental issues.

#### COMMENT

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¶7. (C) Yongyut was one of Thaksin's close associates, and he is widely seen as a practitioner of dirty politics. Allegations that he paid local officials to support his election remain under investigation, and his ability to work constructively with the Democrats is questionable. Despite Yongyut's stated intention to reach out to all the relevant stakeholders, we wonder if he can credibly present himself as an honest broker when it comes time to advance his party's legislative agenda. Given his stated interest in commercial and economic issues, we intend to facilitate events and contacts that would help the Speaker understand the scope of the U.S. investment presence in Thailand and issues of concern to the U.S. business community.

JOHN